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CENTRAL ASIAN PORTRAITS;

THE

CELEBRITIES OF THE KHANATES

AND

THE NEIGHBOURING STATES.

BY

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P R E F A C E.



THE following biographical sketches of some of the principal characters in Central Asian affairs were written with the object of throwing a little more light than we already possess upon a subject to which we too often permit ourselves to show indifference. They are based upon such information as can be gleaned from all authentic books of travel, histories, official documents, &c. &c. Where the description is more meagre than might be desired, the reader will, perhaps, remember that one of the chief reasons for the scarcity of infor-

mation concerning the careers of native rulers and chieftains is the policy which has been persisted in, for years, by the Indian Government of discouraging, and throwing impediments in the way of, exploration by Englishmen. Of late, too, there has been less energy shown than formerly in giving commissions to native explorers.

It is unnecessary to say anything more by way of introduction to what follows. The portraits speak, it is hoped, for themselves. I have endeavoured, to the best of my ability, to regard them from an impartial point of view, and to consider their merits without reference to the part they have played in the development of the rivalry between England and Russia. In some cases I may appear to have awarded too much praise, in others too little. I have sought to try them by a high standard, but I have not, in a weak desire to exaggerate the figure of any of my subjects, strained my

test beyond what seemed legitimate bounds. I leave these portraits, with diffidence, in the hands of the reader, hoping that they may be found to possess some interest and to convey a little instruction, yet not wholly free from the doubt that my clients might, could they be permitted to speak to us, represent themselves in a somewhat different light to that in which they appear to me. But I may say that I have striven to bring them individually before the English reader in as clear a manner as the state of our knowledge will admit.

